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SERMON DCXXVIII.

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THE TWO SIDES.

"Who is on the Lord's side."—Ex. xxxii. 26.

It is not necessary for me to go into any very particular detail of the circumstances in which this question was put to the Israelites. Suffice it to say, that the people were divided into two parties. On the one side, were the worshippers of the golden calf, engaged in offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, and sitting down to eat and drink; and rising up to play, while on the other, were those who continued faithful to the living and true God. Of these two classes the abettors of idolatry were most open and bold, as well as most numerous. As Moses and Joshua came down from the mount, and saw the calf and the dancing, and heard the shouts of the excited multitude, they could be at no loss whatever to determine on which side a vast majority of the people was to be found. So loud and zealous were they as to settle the point at once. But, sad to say, those on the Lord's side appeared far less firm and cordial. For a while they seem indeed to have been borne down by the tide of popular enthusiasm, and it required the well-known voice of their leader and lawgiver, lifted up at the gates of the camp, to recall them to a sense of duty and responsibility.

This was the juncture at which the solemn query was made, "Who is on the Lord's side?" No question could have been more arousing. It must have sent dismay and trepidation into the bosom of the whole host of idolators, while at the same time it so

filled with courage the hearts of God's true worshippers that three thousand men immediately stepped forth, sword in hand, ready to avenge the quarrel of his covenant. Indecision was at an end. Well may we pause and contemplate the scene which this instructive portion of the word of God reveals. Did we not know that the human "heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," we could hardly believe that so wide-spread a defection, at such a time, was at all possible. Mount Sinai was in full sight, its thunderings and lightnings had scarcely ceased, and the appalling darkness still lingered on its summit, when the people made a golden calf and said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Depravity like this seems almost incredible. It constitutes a dreadful page in the history of a stiff-necked and rebellious people.

Such is a brief outline of the case, as given by the inspired writer. But, my brethren, it is with the solemn and momentous question itself, rather than with the events connected with it, that we, as individuals and as a congregation, are chiefly concerned. What we need to know, above everything else is, whether our hearts are right with God. Let me then take the place of Moses, and ask, "Who is on the Lord's side?" This language implies that there are but *two sides* which can possibly be taken, that every one may ascertain on which of *these sides* he is, and that all ought to be on the *Lord's side*. Give me your serious and prayerful attention, while I present each of these points.

I. There are but two sides that can possibly be taken.

Here is a classification of the most simple kind, including the almost endless varieties of the human family, and giving to all their appropriate place. It is one which prevails every where. We find it entering the church and arranging our public assemblies, coming into the neighborhood and dividing the families that live there, and descending to the domestic circle to separate the dwellers under the same roof. Each individual goes, by the operation of this rule, to his own company. All other distinctions of character and position are merged into these two. Were some messenger from the skies to appear among us to-day, with the gift of discerning spirits, and pass along among the occupants of these pews, he would find every man, woman and child, either on the Lord's side or on the side of the world. The very division which appeared at the foot of the burning mountain, exists here. Though not literally and ostensibly separated, there is a real separation. We meet in the same place, sing the same songs, join in the same prayers, and listen to the same sermons, but it is to be feared we are not all on the side of God and truth. No such thing as a third class can exist. How explicit is the language, all that are not for Christ are against him, and such as .

gather not with him, scatter abroad. There is a side which is emphatically called the Lord's side, including all of every age and name, who have chosen "the good part, never to be taken from them;" and besides this there can be but one other side, embracing those of an opposite character. The matter is too plain to need much elucidation. No voice is heard, as in the desert of Sinai, summoning together such as worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, but there is a line drawn, and all are on one side or the other. The world is divided, and this congregation is divided, and many of our families are divided into two distinct classes. Every man, young or old, high or low, learned or ignorant, rich or poor, bond or free, has his place in God's account, either as a believer or an unbeliever, a saint or a sinner, a friend or an enemy. It is so now, it will be so forever.

Shades of difference may exist among such as belong to each of these great divisions. All true Christians do not see with precisely the same eyes, and owing to peculiarities of education and taste, they cannot all wear the same badge, or sit down comfortably at the same communion table. Nor do all the genuine disciples of the Saviour equal each other in earnest and cordial devotion to his cause. Some follow him afar off. These distinctions too, are found among men in whose hearts the love of God has never been shed abroad by the Holy Ghost. Every aspect of religious opinion may be met with here, from the lowest skepticism to the highest speculative orthodoxy, and every grade of conduct from open profligacy to decent and respectable morality. But this by no means proves that there are more than two sides.

Right reason, if suffered to speak out, will teach us thus much. It seems impossible to conceive of men as ranged in any other groups than as reconciled to God or unreconciled, walking in darkness, or children of the light, justified or condemned, in the road to heaven or hell. This is the only vital distinction which the mind can possibly make. There is no neutral position, no blending of parties, no middle class, no state of indifference, none that belong, in fact, neither to one side or the other. The very idea is absurd. Every man on earth is converted or not converted, is an heir of glory or an heir of perdition, and will ultimately receive a crown that fadeth not away, or be consigned to the abodes of despair. Awful as is the statement, it must be made. We should prove recreant to our high trust, and but dabb with untempered mortar, to be any less explicit.

In the achievement of our country's independence, sides were taken, and taken necessarily. Some were bolder and heartier for liberty than others, and were ready to do more and venture more, but no one in those times which tried men's souls, deemed that actual indifference was possible. Pretended friends there were, and inactive foes, but every mind had its preference, and was

really for resisting or yielding, for independence or submission, for Congress or King. Multitudes did indeed refuse to declare themselves. It was their aim so to steer along between the two contending interests, as not utterly to break with either, and be ready to take advantage of the result, let the scale turn which way it might. But the thing was difficult then, and it is impracticable now. In a business where, not the words nor the professions are mainly concerned, but the heart, it is absolutely impossible to be non-committal.

How do the *Scriptures* represent this matter? Here we learn that, originally, and as men come into the world, they are all on the wrong side, and there they continue until some are translated from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Now, a new interest is set up. A church not of the world, but gathered out of the world, and leaving the world behind, necessitates the existence of two classes; to the one or the other of which every son and daughter of Adam must belong. No third company is known or spoken of from Genesis to Revelation. The distinction at this very moment is as real, though not so palpable, as it will be, when the Lord Jesus Christ comes to separate between the righteous and the wicked, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. There are those, we admit, who halt between two opinions. Not a few are almost persuaded to be Christians. A mixed multitude may generally be seen hanging upon the skirts of the camp. Some too are disciples secretly for fear of the world. A sense of unworthiness keeps them away from the Lord's table. Never can they acquire courage enough to be decided. But all this does not prove that there are more than two sides. The early Prophets were surrounded by those who heard and those who forbore to hear. Christ preached to such as listened gladly and such as were filled with indignation. The Apostles found in the same audience, believers and despisers of the great salvation. No third side is spoken of.

Let these remarks reach where they may, and dis sever whom they may, make them we must. The marts of trade bring multitudes together in close and frequent contact, and thousands are united by the civilities and courtesies of life, who, nevertheless, are on entirely different sides. Children nursed on the same lap and baptized at the same altar, are often very opposite in feeling and character. Nay, more, it is no strange thing to find that those who are allied together by the strong and tender bonds of conjugal affection, are walking in totally distinct paths, and are going to totally distinct worlds. There are but two sides, and every human being is on one side or the other. If one company be small compared with the other, if Elijah alone has to confront a multitude of false prophets, if only seven thousand can be found in all Israel that have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal, and if but few walk in the narrow path, while many throng the

broad road, still these constitute a side, and besides, there is but one other. On this subject there is no room for doubt. There is but a single grand distinction in our world, and it is that which subsists between the children of God and the children of the wicked one; those who love and obey the truth, and the workers of iniquity. But,

II. Every one, if faithful to himself, may ascertain on which side he is.

The two grand interests into which the world is divided are not only distinct, but absolutely incompatible. So far as all that is acceptable to God is concerned, and all that is saving and experimental in the knowledge of his grace, they have nothing in common. On the one side of the line every one is a follower of God as a dear child, and, on the other, every one is walking according to the course of the present evil world. Each class has its appropriate characteristics, its distinctive dispositions and habits, and these are so marked that all may know where they stand, if not sadly wanting to their own highest welfare. No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. It would seem that men *need not* be in the dark on this subject. As all, by nature, are on the side of sin and Satan, a deep and radical change of moral character must be felt, when they come over to the side of Christ and truth and holiness. Very expressive terms are employed to describe the wonderful alteration of views and feelings which now takes place. It is called a passing from death to life, a coming out of darkness into marvellous light, a birth, not by the will of the flesh, or of man, but of God. When this momentous internal revolution occurs, man becomes a new creature, or a new creation, in Christ Jesus, and so far as tastes, enjoyments, and way of life are concerned, old things pass away and all things become new. God is a different being, Christ a different Saviour, the Bible a different book, the church a different place, and heaven and hell different worlds. The change in all respects is too remarkable to occur, and the subject of it know nothing, and be able to tell nothing of it. Such certainly is the general rule. Though regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit, men are not passive in it, in any sense, which implies ignorance of its nature and effects. Some, it is granted, may be sanctified from the womb, or the converting grace of God may accompany the earliest possible religious culture, so that there can be no distinct consciousness of a change of sides. No doubt instances of this sort not unfrequently occur, and what is more, they often prove singularly happy in their results. Every step of the whole subsequent life proves that the affections of these persons are set on things above, and this is the best of all

evidence that they have been born from above. No one should ask for more. But this does not in the least militate against the statement, that none can be the real friends of Christ, without distinct marks of discipleship. The particular day or hour when the change occurred, may have preceded the period of recollection, or it may have been effected by very imperceptible processes, but the thing itself has occurred, as the whole tone and temper of the person evince. Thousands of men of the most unimpeachable Christian character, are never able to fix, with any degree of certainty, upon the precise time and place of their conversion. The tree is known by its fruit, and if the fruit be good, we need no other proof that the tree is good. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor do figs grow on thistles. Still, while all this is readily admitted, it would be a most unwarrantable inference, from such premises, to suppose that regeneration can ever take place without bringing along with it, and drawing after it, very decisive tests of its reality. The Lord's side is not so much like the other side as to render it impossible to distinguish between them. If it were so, we should not be exhorted to examine ourselves in order that we may ascertain whether we are in the faith. Look at any one genuine convert and see what the *change is*, as his spirit and conduct go to set it forth. Once, it might be said of him, with almost literal truth, that he cared for none of these things, but now the subject of religion is uppermost in his mind, when he lies down and rises up. Once, sin seemed a mere trifle which might be easily overlooked, but now it is the abominable thing that the Lord hates. Once, Christ was as a root out of dry ground, without form or comeliness, but now he is the chief among ten thousands, and altogether lovely. Once, he felt dissatisfied with the Divine government, but now he rejoices from the heart that the Lord reigns. In all these respects he is not as he formerly was, nor does he occupy the side he formerly did. There has been a great change and he has felt it.

But, let me add, it is not on past experience chiefly, much less exclusively, that the Christian lives. An old hope is worth very little, except as it is sustained and confirmed by present evidence; and for a man to cry peace to his soul, because some five, ten, or twenty years ago he was awakened and found comfort, is hazardous in the extreme. No one that really loves God, and is born of God, ever takes this ground. What has transpired is encouraging only, as connected with existing exercises. This very day finds the believer, as much as at any former time, admitting that he is a sinner, exercising repentance, depending on Christ for justification, and striving for close conformity to the Divine will. In this sense he forgets the things which are behind, and presses on toward the mark. Do you still doubt on which side he is? Go listen to his prayers and see him perusing his Bible. Go sit down by his side in the day of trouble and witness his sweet sub-

mission to the will of God. Go learn how he daily feels, and on what his heart is supremely fixed. Hear him tell how good it is for one so poor and helpless as he knows himself to be, to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and what consolation he derives from the thought that salvation from first to last is of the Lord. Mark with what interest he attends to the duties of religion; how precious are his seasons of private and domestic devotion; with what earnestness he listens to the preaching of the gospel; and how delighted he is to hear of the conversion of sinners. These things tell us, with sufficient plainness, on which side he is.

It is not asserted that the good man's evidences are equally distinct at all times. Allowance must be made for hours of gloom, arising from mental depression, debilitating disease, and the fiery darts of the evil one. It may be God's plan to lead him now and then through the deep waters of temptation and desertion. No wonder if at such seasons every ray of the sun of righteousness seems to be shut out from his soul, and he can do nothing but write bitter things against himself. But the sadness of the believer, often scarcely less than his joy, his complaints scarcely less than his praises, his discouragements scarcely less than his confidence, indicate where his treasure lies. Desires after God tell what the state of the heart is, as well as joy in God. To such the language applies with all its emphasis: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

As a general thing men *may* know, and they *ought* to know, where they stand. As there are but two sides that can possibly be taken, and as all on one side are the friends of God, and all on the other are his enemies, this is not a matter that should be left in uncertainty for a single day or hour. Some are so evidently on the wrong side that the case is determined by merely looking at it. Like Cain, they openly go out from the presence of the Lord; like Saul, they directly disobey God; and like Sodom, they proclaim their sin, and hide it not. Every thing—their neglect of the Bible—their mis-improvement of the Sabbath, and their omission of prayer, indicates more clearly than words could do, how it is with them. Had they the opportunity they would no doubt unite with the men who once came to the Saviour and prayed him to depart from their coasts. But, blessed be God, others are just as openly and publicly on the right side. If any thing can be made clear by human testimony, it is that they have chosen the good part, which can never be taken away from them. This is often plain to themselves, and it is no less plain to others.

God's Word contains very unambiguous *marks* of discipleship. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." "Abide in me and

I in you, for as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me." Such texts, faithfully and prayerfully applied, can scarcely lead to mistakes. In the decision of this question we must not rely upon our baptism, or our pious ancestry, or our religious education, or our respect for the institutions of the gospel. None of these things will stand us instead when the judgment is set and the books are opened. The Bible tells us that many will say to Christ at the last day, "Have we not eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets?" To whom he will reply: "Depart from me; I never knew you." Solemn reflection this! Names are nothing; places are nothing; offices are nothing. "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." All that are on the Lord's side, belong to what church they may, and wear what badge they please, love the cross, the yoke, and the kingdom of the Redeemer, and prefer Jerusalem above their chief joy. For this one great object they desire to live, and for it they hope to die. Is it not true, then, that if men are faithful to themselves, they may know on which side they stand? The touch-stone is at hand, and the idea of passing on towards the retributions of eternity, with no certainty as to the final issue, is dreadful indeed. This is not a question which should be left undecided.

III. *There are good and sufficient reasons why all should be on the Lord's side.*

There can be no disagreement here. If there be but two sides that can possibly be chosen, the side of holiness or sin, of the church or the world, of God or Satan, who can hesitate, for a moment, where to place himself. Why delay or waver.

1. The Lord's side is the *right* side—the side of pure and unchanging rectitude. No man can justify it to himself that he does not at once break off his sins by righteousness, and accept of the salvation offered to him in the gospel, and become a visible follower of the Redeemer. The case is too plain to admit of dispute. If we have offended God, ought we not, upon every fair and honorable principle, to be sorry for it? and if he has provided a way of pardon, ought we not immediately and thankfully to embrace it? Not to do this, it may be safely said, is to go contrary to the clearest dictates of judgment and conscience. God is too good a being; his laws are too excellent, and his gospel is too precious to be either neglected or despised, by a single individual, without incurring a weight of guilt sufficient to crush the sinner to the dust. In itself considered, and apart from all consequences, either in this world or the world to come, it is right to be on the Lord's side; and not to be there is a grievous, unmitigated wrong. Where should thinking, reflecting, im-

mortal creatures be found, if not with him in whom they live and move and have their being, who is excellent in counsel and wonderful in working.

There is no epithet that can fully depict the criminality of being in the ranks of opposition to God. Irrespective of every thing to be gained or lost here or hereafter, the right and the wrong may easily be seen, if we will but pause a moment to inquire who they are who are on the Lord's side, and who they are who are on the side of his adversaries. In one class we find all the excellent and lovely of the universe, holy angels, the spirits of just men made perfect, patriarchs, prophets and apostles, and the whole blessed company of such as have been redeemed unto God by the blood of the Lamb. But who, let me ask, are on the other side? The devil and his angels, with the souls of lost men, and all the Sabbath-breakers, profane swearers and unbelievers now on earth, or that will be found on earth till the end of time. Consider well where you stand, and among whom you stand, if still unreconciled to God. Have you really thought that by living estranged from your Maker and refusing to have the Lord Jesus Christ to reign over you, you are virtually seeking to make a covenant with death and an agreement with hell? Do you realize that the taking of such a stand links your destiny in with all that is vile and odious in the universe of God? Let the careless, impenitent world judge as it may; the day is hastening on when, not to be really and truly on the Lord's side, will be regarded as a crime of the darkest hue. The "ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib," and for man not to know God, or consider his claims, is to sink himself below the beasts that perish. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this; the Lord has nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against him.

2. Again. The Lord's side is the side of *real* and *permanent enjoyment*. On this point we call for the testimony of the men who have come over from the ranks of sin and of the world, and have sincerely and from the heart avouched the Lord Jehovah to be their God. These are the best of all witnesses, for the simple reason, that they know both sides. What, then, is their united and constant declaration in regard to this matter? They tell us, with one unvarying voice, that the peace of a good man is like a river, and his righteousness as the waves of the sea. Their language, without a solitary exception is, "godliness with contentment is great gain." Experience has taught them the difference between the fountain of living waters and those broken cisterns that can hold no water. Even on the score of mere happiness, nothing could induce them to go back to the other side. Nay, we may summon as witnesses bad men as well as good men. Often are they compelled to cry out, Balaam-like, "how goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be

like his." The want of religion teaches the worth of it, scarcely less than the possession of it, and the pain occasioned by its absence shows its value as fully as the pleasure produced by its presence. We need no prophet to come and tell us that "the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt."

A life of piety and a life of happiness go hand-in-hand together, our enemies themselves being judges. We but utter the feelings of every individual bosom, just as truly as we utter the declaration of God's Word, when we affirm that "there is no peace for the wicked." Felicity is not found in connexion with impenitence, and unbelief, and neglect of the counsels of the Most High. Every one, unless it be a few abandoned reprobates, is ready to admit that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life which now is, as well as of that which is to come." The best of men and the worst are of the same opinion here. That the work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever, is a fact written on the heart as with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond. Be assured you will never know what real enjoyment is until you come over to the Lord's side. God himself takes part with all such as fear and love his blessed name, and whoever touches them maliciously, touches the apple of his eye. His truth and honor are pledged in the presence of the whole intelligent universe for their highest welfare. The very trials they endure will but purify their affections, the tears they shed will become so many seeds of sacred joy, and the disappointments through which they pass will only prepare them to wear a brighter crown. God gives them grace as a prelude to giving them glory, and no good thing does he ever withhold from them that walk uprightly. His presence with them banishes fear, neutralizes pain, affords support in trouble, and gilds the gloom of the grave with the radiance of immortality. All is well to those who are on the Lord's side, and will be well for ever.

3. Once more. The Lord's side is the side that must ultimately prevail. Be it known that those who forget God and refuse submission to his anointed Son, are chargeable with the folly of embarking on board a vessel which is doomed inevitably to be wrecked. "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!" was the desponding cry of one of the worst foes the cross ever knew; and it will be the cry of every wicked man. This outburst of desperation was wrung from the poor rebel's heart, by the gathering storms of Divine indignation, but it is nothing more than every impenitent sinner shall express sooner or later. All power in heaven and on earth is committed to the Lord Jesus Christ, and he will reign until every enemy is put under his feet. Though for a while they may exalt themselves to heaven, the hand of the Almighty will be sure, by and by, to bring them down to hell.

Decide for yourselves whether any one can harden himself

against God and prosper. As well might the stubble lift itself up against the whirlwind which prostrates the mighty oak. Inevitable downfall awaits every man and every interest that shall ultimately be found dissevered from the kingdom and interests of the Lord God Almighty. Nothing can ever stay the course of omnipotent justice. The destruction of the wicked is inevitable; for has God said it, and will he not do it? And it will be overwhelming; for who can stand when he rises up? Those that believe not must be damned. The wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God. As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, O man, there is but one safe side. Only join yourself to the Lord according to the provisions of his own gracious and perpetual covenant, and his kingdom will become your kingdom, his interests your interests, and his joy, your joy forever. God will cover you with his feathers, and under his wing shalt thou trust. If the blessed Redeemer continue to hold his throne, and to be exalted at the right hand of power, he will bring you off conqueror and more than conqueror. In his hands you cannot but be safe. Come what will, his enemies shall all melt away like frost before the rising sun, but upon himself and upon his friends will the crown flourish.

In conclusion—will you not, one and all, cordially and resolutely *choose the Lord's side* this very day? There is, I beg you to consider, but one single alternative: you must be for God or against him. Either his friends or enemies you are at the present moment; either his friends or enemies you will be when you come to die; and either his friends or enemies must you continue during the long lapse of eternal ages. O make your decision at once, and make it as you will wish you had done when the angel lifts his hand to heaven, and swears that time shall be no longer.

Men and brethren, have you an aching heart that needs the balm of Gilead? Are you desirous to find a friend to whom you may unbosom that secret anguish which often corrodes your spirits? Does the world at seasons look all empty and desolate like a vast wilderness? Would you secure a safe shelter from the tempest which is finally to descend upon the workers of iniquity? Choose then, Oh choose the Lord's side without delay. If you wait a week, or a day, or an hour, it may be too late. To-morrow's sun, for aught mortal man can say, may shine on your grave. Many a dear friend feels a deep interest in the decision you make. Here is a venerated father, with his head all covered with blossoms for the tomb, exclaiming in your ears, "Beloved children, I charge you to meet me at the right hand of the Son of God." Yonder is a devout mother just going to a better land; but she stops, to cry out, "My son, the son of my womb, the son of my vows—choose the Lord's side." A fond sister throws her arms around your neck, and with her sweetest kisses says, "Dear brother, come go with me, and I will do you good." Nay, even

remoter relationship utters her voice and asks, "How can I bear to see the evil that is coming upon my kindred, and how can I endure the destruction of my people?" Alas! if you press on to perdition, you must break through this thick array of tears and prayers. But there are kinder, tenderer accents than all these. It is not a stranger that extends to you his arm and solicits your love, but Jesus—for your sakes clothed in flesh, and known as the sufferer of Calvary. Hear him speaking out of the fulness of his heart, and inviting you to come over on the Lord's side. By the sorrows of Gethsemane and the agonies of the cross, he asks you to share with him in his kingdom and in his crown. Can you refuse?

My friends, the day is at hand when it will be felt to be worth ten thousand worlds like this to be on the right side. Great events appear to be thickening and crowding together in the distance; and if we may foretell the future by the shadows which these events cast before them, a period of unheard-of moment can not be far off. The tempest's blast is even now sounding, and the hosts are mustering for battle. But there is a safe side, and I look around upon a troubled, agitated world, only to urge you with more pressing earnestness, to come, with all you have, and identify your cause with the cause of truth and of God. Enter into the chambers of his mercy, and hide yourself until the indignation be overpast.

Now is the accepted time, and this is the day of salvation. In the name of that Saviour, whose minister I am, I offer you a gracious admission among the ranks of the redeemed. On his behalf I come, once more, to assure you there yet is room. O neighbor, companion, friend, there is a place for you. The process of enlistment into the army of Prince Immanuel is still going on, and though I cannot promise you exemption from toil and strife, yet, blessed be God! I can guarantee final victory. But, remember, a little delay may close the door against you forever. Alas, my dear people, painful visions rise before my mind! I imagine that the day for which all other days were made, has come, and pastor and flock are summoned to meet the Son of God on his great white throne. Preaching is over, prayer is over, entreaty is over. But all are not on the same side. The wife is beckoned to stand on the right hand, but the husband on the left; the parent is found here, but the child there; the sister is in one place, but her brother in another. O Saviour of men, must it, must it be so? Are there to be two sides among the people who have so long been listening to my voice? Forbid it, gracious God. There is nothing which I would not give to meet you all in heaven. Would you be right at last? Then give immediate and earnest heed to the question which is put to you to day:—Who is on the Lord's side? and answer it as you believe it will be answered in the hour that shall make manifest the secrets of every heart.

SERMON DCXXIX.

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GOSPEL MINISTER'S CHARACTER AND PLATFORM.

"For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."—1 COR. II. 2.

WHEN Jesus Christ, the one, only, sole and supreme Head of the Church, ascended up on high, after his resurrection from the dead, "He led captivity captive," and for a legacy to his people, "gave gifts to men." Among the chief of these gifts are the influences of the Holy Spirit and the written word, teaching us the will of God for our salvation. *"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."*—EPH. iv. 11-15.

1st. It is obvious from this passage of holy scripture that *living* teachers of the way of salvation are set in the church by Divine appointment. At one time they were patriarchs and prophets; at another, apostles and evangelists; and now, they are bishops or pastors and teachers. While the Revelation of the Divine will was in progress, and while the Gospel was being gradually revealed to mankind, prophets and apostles of the highest order were necessary; but when the canon of the Revealed will was complete—when the Gospel dispensation was fully introduced, prophets and apostles gave place to *pastors* and teachers, who are bishops or overseers of the people. 2dly. It is equally palpable that the object of the Divine appointment of a class of men from time to time to be servants of the Most High God, showing unto us the way of salvation, is eminently for the instruction of mankind—for the edifying and comforting of believers. The Church is God's great teaching Institution. Her ministers are missionaries of light, and heralds of His good will to men. They are sent to teach all nations *for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*

I. In the Scriptures of our God various significant names are given to religious teachers, expressive of their character.

We find bishop, overseer, pastor, ambassador, angel or messenger applied to one and the same person. These names are expressive not of different orders or ranks in the Gospel ministry, but significant of various duties performed by the ministers of the church. They are for the same reason called rulers, governors, watchmen, soldiers, builders, and laborers. These titles are highly expressive of their character and appropriate work. *Are they laborers?* Then it is their duty to sow, plant, water and cultivate God's vineyard. They are sent to toil with pains and diligence, and wait for the harvest. *Soldiers?* Then they are engaged in war against the powers of darkness. As soldiers they are required to endure fatigue, and to persevere through dangers and difficulties, following their glorious leader unto death and victory. *Watchmen?* Then are they set on the high places, to give due warning by night and day of the dangers that threaten. They are set to watch for souls, as men that must give an account. They must keep awake themselves, and arouse the sleeping, and cry aloud to those that are dead in sin, lest the blood of those that perish should fall upon their heads as unfaithful watchmen. They are commanded to utter all God's judgments, whether the people will hear or forbear. And as *stewards of the manifold mysteries of the household of God*, they are to give every one his portion in season. Milk to babes and meat to such as are strong. *Are they ambassadors?* Then they are the accredited ministers of heaven, to treat of peace between God and man. To them is given the word of Reconciliation. They are sent by Christ, and speak in God's name, as though God did beseech us by them to be reconciled to Him. As ambassadors their mission is one of the highest dignity and of most tremendous responsibilities. They are to maintain the dignity and honor of their government, and so manage their mission, that the sovereign clemency, wisdom, glory and majesty of the King of kings may be seen in the salvation of sinners reconciled to Him and saved from sin by the death and mediation of His own well-beloved Son. Are they called *angels or messengers?* This is the title given to those pure and sublime natures who surround the eternal throne—ever doing the will of God—and are sent forth to minister to those that are heirs of salvation. Ministers who are the angels of the churches, which are the glory of Christ, should be like these holy spirits, in elevation of thought and devotion, and in the consecration of themselves to the study of the works, the word and glory of God; and as the angels above, ever be found doing the will of their Lord, especially in ministering to the souls for whom the "angel of the covenant" made himself a propitiatory sacrifice. The most common appellation by which religious teachers are known, is that of minister

or pastor, both of which terms are expressive of the duties of their office. As ministers, they are servants of the church for Christ's sake. As bishops or overseers or pastors, which terms mean the same thing, they are to overlook and feed the flock. A pastor or shepherd is one who takes care of sheep, not only that they feed in good pastures, but also that they be not torn by wild beasts, or hurt in any other way.* In the favorite *twenty-third* psalm, God is called a SHEPHERD, by which we are to understand, that He leads, feeds, preserves and heals his people, as a shepherd does his flock. Our Blessed Saviour calls himself the good shepherd, who not only exposes his own life, but does actually, and willingly lay it down for his own sheep, and takes charge, oversight and care of them, dispensing to them such things as they have need of. In a few places of Scripture civil and political rulers are called pastors. In the Bible, ministers of the Gospel are called shepherds, bishops or pastors, signifying that their office was, like that of a shepherd, to feed, lead, guard, heal, and watch over their charges. The prophet Jeremiah, in the name of the Lord, promised the ten tribes, if they would return to Him, by repentance, that He would give them pastors after his own heart, who should feed them with knowledge and understanding—that is, *instruct* and *save* them. But the true Israel are the same in every age, and that which was the richest promise to the church in prophetic times, is the richest gift that God has bestowed upon his people in these last days—pastors after his own heart, who have an open vision from Him, to reveal unto the people the riches of His Grace.

As then the pastoral office is one of divine appointment, the churches are to love their pastors, and tenderly cherish them, and honor them very highly for their work's sake, and encourage and sustain them in their many arduous labors.

Pastors being called of God to their holy office—being set apart for the edification of the church, should devote themselves wholly and faithfully to their work. They should love the truth and preach it faithfully and affectionately, and so conduct themselves as to magnify their office by glorifying God in the salvation of the souls of men.

II. Thus we see by whatever titles ministers of the Gospel are known in the Scriptures, the prominent idea is, that they are men of God, *servants of the Most High*, converted by His grace, called by His Spirit, and set apart to His work. And the nature of their office, and their place in the world's history, not now understood, and their bearing on the cycles of a rapidly coming eternity in regard to the happiness or misery of immortal souls that are passing through time on our globe to future immensity, may be farther seen by considering briefly THE GREAT

* See Cruden.

PLATFORM, on which they are set forth as a spectacle to men and angels. Their character, titles and work have passed rapidly before us. The text was the platform of the great apostle before Jew and Gentile; in Arabia and in Athens, in Jerusalem and in Corinth.

The CROSS OF CHRIST was his favorite topic. The chosen subject of his discourse, the grand theme of all his writings. He gloried not in his Abrahamic descent, not in his Hebrew lore, not in his classic attainments, not in his mighty intellect, but in the Cross of Christ. Though a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and as touching the law blameless, and though brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, we do not hear him speak of his genealogy or of his learning. Nor does he boast of his miraculous gifts or visions, or eminent usefulness, although he had been caught up to the third heavens and had visions unutterable, and had planted churches and built churches not on another man's foundation, and had been honored as the *very chiefest of the apostles*. All these things he considered as nothing. "God forbid that I should glory," says he, "save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

1. *To know Christ and Him crucified* is to know the whole Gospel, and to preach from this platform is to preach Christ crucified as the whole Gospel. The cross of Christ is put for His humiliation and suffering. It is the representative of His death, its manner and ignominy. To preach Christ and Him crucified, therefore, is to preach salvation through the satisfaction which He rendered unto the divine and immutable law—to explain the method by which sin is pardoned, and how the forgiveness of the penitent sinner is reconciled with the justice and holiness of God. To preach Christ and Him crucified, then, is to declare the miraculous conception of the Son of God—his true human nature, and yet His proper Divinity—to reveal His holy and benevolent character—how He laid down His life as an expiation for our sins—how he was wounded for our transgressions—bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace being laid upon Him—a lamb slain from the foundation of the world—the Lamb that was slain still standing bleeding before the throne in the midst of the elders and angels that are round about the throne. Hence, to *know Christ and Him crucified*, is to set forth the death of Christ as the great central point of the Christian system—that the great purpose for which He came into the world was to die under the law, in the room and stead of his people—that by this great vicarious sacrifice of Himself, in behalf of His people, God can be just and yet the justifier of all who believe in Jesus. To *know Christ and Him crucified* is to know the glorious method of *Free Grace* revealed in the Gospel—a method honorable to God, because, while He receives the transgressor into favor, He expresses his aversion to sin in the strongest manner, and requires that the demand of His holy law be perfectly

fulfilled; and yet all this is done in a method suited to man, coming down to his weakness and wretchedness, and offering him just as he is in this sin-smitten world, in which he is born, and out of which he is to die and appear before his Creator, a finished gratuitous, honorable and glorious salvation. To preach Christ and Him crucified is to preach the being and glorious perfection of Jehovah as the one only living and true God, the Creator of all things; the future judgment and eternal state of righteous retribution; the lost state of man, and his recovery through the One great Mediation; the necessity of regeneration, repentance, conversion and personal holiness through the Spirit; the duties and precepts of the Gospel.

“THE WORD OF GOD ONLY;
THE GRACE OF CHRIST ONLY;
THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT ONLY.”

2. *The minister of the Gospel who stands on the apostle's great platform must know Christ experimentally as his Saviour.* He must be truly a pious man. He must know by experience what it is to repent and believe, and have a sweet experience in his own soul of the preciousness of the Saviour's love. How can he point others to the Lamb of God, if he has not seen Him for himself? How can he teach others, who has not himself been taught? There is something fearful in the idea of an unconverted and ungodly minister. Terrible is the thought that his own doctrines and preaching shall come up as a swift witness against himself in the great day of eternity—that having preached Christ to others, and thereby been the instrument of saving others, he should himself be a castaway. But such things have occurred. There were wicked prophets and false apostles, and there are doubtless unconverted ministers. It becomes us all to watch and pray.

3. *The minister's platform is to believe and preach the same truths that Jesus Christ believed and preached.* There is no irreverence in speaking of the creed and worship of our Lord. He was an example in all righteousness. His inner life as the God-man—mediator, as to the truth which he believed, the precepts he honored and the devotions he poured out to his God, is the highest model for the piety of every one that believes in Him. As his ministers, we are to believe and preach what the Son of God believed and preached, concerning God his Father, himself and the Eternal Spirit, and the whole economy of free grace. The DIVINE WORD, therefore, which is the utterance of Christ's Spirit to us by prophets and apostles, is the sum total of all we are to believe and preach. It is our armament, arsenal, fleet, artillery and land forces, with which we are to lead his sacramental hosts in our great aggressive movements upon the kingdom of darkness. We must enforce and explain the Scriptures, because they

testify of Jesus, and therefore it is that in them we have eternal life. The Scriptures set forth Christ crucified in promises, prophecies and types. They give an account of his birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension and intercession. They represent from beginning to end a suffering, atoning, dying, yet living and reigning Messiah as the only hope of mankind. The sacred oracles are our "only Rule of Faith and manners." It is by the *truth through the sanctification of the Spirit, that men are to be saved—sanctified through the truth—begotten by the truth.* The Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. There is then great amplitude as well as emphasis in the Apostle's injunction—**PREACH THE WORD.** If insulated texts are used, however eloquently and skilfully it may be done, there is danger that the minister's discourses will be substituted for the Divine Word, and that his discourses will become mere dry rhetorical flourishes or essays, and **SENTIMENTS**, opinions, and fancies be regarded as the teachings of eternal truth. Holy Scripture must be explained by Holy Scripture, and not wrested out of its proper connection. The customs of the country of their several writers, and the idioms and meanings of the words, in which the mind of the Spirit has been communicated, must be understood by the interpreter of the sacred text. This expository method of preaching is sometimes called lecturing. It is more difficult, if it be well done, than the topical essay kind of preaching; but I doubt not far more agreeable to God, who hath placed the chief honor on his word as his instrument for converting men from error. Earnest, pointed, practical exposition was without doubt the primitive mode of preaching. It was thus Ezra preached. He read the law and then caused the people to know its meaning. The blessed Saviour stood up and read out of the Jewish Scriptures, and then sat down and taught the people the true meaning of what he had read. It was thus Philip preached to the Eunuch, and in like manner we find that Paul and the other apostles were daily engaged in expounding the Scriptures to the people in the synagogues. The Reformers, and the most eminent and useful ministers of Christ in past ages, have been able doctrinal, expository preachers of the Word. This mode of preaching has this advantage—that the minister always has his subject before him, and in going through a book by chapter and verse, all sorts of characters are spread out before him, and all manner of opinions, so that he has an opportunity of striking home every kind of error, without seeming to aim his discourses at particular persons in his congregation. It may be best, sometimes, for a pastor to use but a single text as the theme of his discourse; but the fullness and the richness, the profitableness and the *mellowness* of his ministrations, will depend upon his acquaintance with, fondness for, and ability in expounding the whole volume of God's truth. Its promises, threatenings,

doctrines and precepts, rewards and punishments, are set forth best when preached in the order of the Spirit of God. If a minister of the Gospel, through ignorance or indolence, or for the want of courage, smother up the light that is given him—if he do not preach and cause his hearers to understand the great truths of Revelation, he is a *traitor* to his Sovereign, or totally unfit for his mission. The burden of the Lord on the minister who stands on the Apostle's platform, will always be "Repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ." "Christ the wisdom of God and the power of God." "Of God Christ is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and complete redemption."

4. *On the Apostle's platform Christ is set forth as the minister's MODEL in the manner as well as the matter of preaching.* The minister of the Gospel who knows nothing but Christ and Him crucified will strive to imitate the Son of God in his humility, piety and zeal. Our Lord had all wisdom and power, yet never was there one so meek and unassuming. He never exerted his omnipotence for display, nor for His own personal comfort. *He who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, took upon himself the form of a servant—humbled himself—emptied himself of his ineffable glory—and became a man—a man of sorrows and of sufferings, obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* The minister of Christ, therefore, is not to preach himself, but Christ Jesus the Saviour of sinners. He is not to preach his own fancies or sentiments, but the words of eternal life. "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, the unsearchable riches of Christ." There may be—there will be differences and diversities as to the form and manner in which Divine truths are presented by preachers of the Word; yet Christ must ever be the centre in which all the lines of Truth meet. The preacher of the word may command the wealth of history, the powers of eloquence and the charms of rhetoric—splendid talents, varied and profound attainments, great learning and untiring research, and the more knowledge of men and things, of learning sacred and profane he can lay under tribute, the better able is he to be useful, but like the wise men from the East, he must lay all his talents and attainments at the feet of Jesus. If he speak in "thoughts that breathe and words that burn," let it be of Christ, *the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person—the Lord JEHOVAH, OUR STRENGTH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS.* The Apostle Paul, on the great platform laid down by himself, is an example to be well studied and followed. He had talents to shine in the Senate, or to rule in the Sanhedrim—genius and position to have been among the first men in his nation; but the only pre-eminence he desired after his conversion, was a pre-eminence in suffering and in devotion to the glory of His Divine master. See Acts xx: 17,

27. Paul was a preacher of *free grace*—a doctrinal, argumentative, earnest, practical preacher. He brought logic and rhetoric and philosophy and the heathen classics, and a well trained and powerful mind to the cross of Christ, and baptized them all into his blood. The prominent, the chief topic in all his discourses and in all his epistles, is *free grace*. How often do we hear him acknowledge his indebtedness to redeeming love. He seems never to weary of the theme, nor to have been ashamed of his obligations. *By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God*, was with him a sort of stereotyped address. He exulted in the obligations laid upon him as a sinner saved by free grace. He speaks of it as *undeserved, unexpected*, and when first revealed to him *undesired*. He says it came to him from the highest Heavens, arrested him in his career of impiety and persecution, and made known to him a saviour. *Free, sovereign grace* is the affecting theme that melts his heart, elevates his powers, and tunes his tongue to praise—which dissolves his whole soul in tenderness and pours out the deep emotions which heaved his bosom. He could say by experience: *It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief*. The grandeur of his mind; the amplitude and strength of his intellect; his moral courage; his heroic devotion, his patience in suffering; his powerful genius; his decision of character; his fixedness of purpose; his eloquence and zeal—all give him a prominence in the ministry of God's dear Son, that well entitle him to the study and careful imitation of all Christ's preaching servants. Who more powerful, massive, clear and overwhelming in argument than Paul with the subtle and vain philosopher? Who more terrible in dealing out the thunders of Jehovah and sounding forth the trumpet-tongued curses of Sinai against gainsayers and all the ungodly tribe, who refuse free grace? And yet never was there a more tender and affectionate son of consolation in his discourses to the timid disciple. He knew better than any other man how to wind his way into the human soul—"how to coil around its most sacred affections—how to explore the secret place of tears, and to put in motion all its kindest sympathies." But, it is when he speaks of the fullness, depth, length and breadth of free grace, whereof he was a minister, and an Apostle both to Jew and Gentile, that he looms higher and shines more gloriously than on any other subject. Here all his powers of intellect, and all his feelings are concentrated. He declares unhesitatingly that the *grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was exceeding abundant—and that he had obtained it for this end, that in him, first the Saviour might show forth all long suffering to them who should believe on Him, to life everlasting*. He regarded himself as a monument inscribed with: **THERE IS FORGIVENESS WITH GOD**. He tells us, moreover,

that his ministry was marked with *many tears*. I have often thought of the Apostle in tears. I have tried to imagine how he must have looked when preaching free grace in tears. There is something peculiarly affecting, tender and sublime in the tears of an Apostle. But wherefore, O thou man of God, these "many tears?" Did he weep before the Jewish Sanhedrim or before the Roman Governor? Did he weep when he was shipwrecked—when he was put in prison—when he was scourged—when he was stoned and taken up half dead—or when he was in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, or in perils of false brethren, or when he was carried to Rome and appeared before Nero, and under sentence of death, or when taken to the block to be beheaded? No, my brethren, there is no record of any tears from Paul on any of these occasions. But he does tell us expressly, *that none of these things move me; nor do I count my life any thing, only that I may finish with joy the ministry of the Lord Jesus. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.*

The fountain of his tears was sealed up too deep to flow on his own account. But the great deeps of his heart were broken up, when he saw his countrymen rejecting the only Messiah—when he saw his fellow-men rejecting free grace—putting away from them the only words of eternal life. Having a full view of the completeness and glory of the Gospel, and of the terrors of the Lord, and the awful destruction that awaits the finally impenitent from the presence of the Lord, he could not refrain from tears. Now the eyes that knew no tears while he stood in chains before a Roman governor, nor when he was sentenced to death by the bloody Nero, are suffused and overflowing. *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.* He was willing to be accursed after the manner of Christ, for his brethren's sakes. Like the prophet, he was ready to exclaim, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people." Whitefield and many other eminent servants of God have not been able to refrain from tears when pleading with sinners to be reconciled to God.

5. For a minister of the Gospel to stand on the platform of knowing nothing but Christ and Him crucified, is, as the dying Rutherford said to his fellow presbyters: "To do all for Christ; to pray for Christ, study and preach for Christ; feed the flock committed to your charge for Christ; to visit and catechise for God, and out of love to the souls of men, and to beware of men-pleasing." In a word, it is to make Christ the all in all of his ministry—the soul of all Christian graces, ordinances and sacraments. Psalms and hymns, spiritual songs, prayers and sermons, baptism and the holy supper are nothing without Christ. He gives them all

their value. Christ, my brethren, is the subject of all our preaching—the ground of argument, the magazine of arms, and the great motive of persuasion. He is all that we want to give peace to the conscience, strength to the feeble, patience and courage to the suffering. He is all that is wanted to purify the affections, and loosen us from earth, and lift us up to Heaven. Christ formed within us the hope of glory; will be followed by the setting of our affections on things that are above. If we preach the *law*, it is that it may be a schoolmaster to bring our fellow-men to Christ, the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. If we preach *repentance*, it is because Christ is exalted to the right hand of God, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel and forgiveness of sins—that repentance should be preached everywhere in his name. Do we preach *faith*? It is because Christ is the author, object, and finisher of faith. And if as faithful men, who cannot shun to declare the whole counsel of God, we preach *the torments of Hell*, it is to warn men of the wrath to come, and induce them to flee to Christ as a glorious refuge. And when we preach the joys of heaven, it is to allure to that bright world—to encourage sinners to fly to Christ, who is the way to the inheritance of the saints in glory. As ministers we are without occupation, commission, authority, subject or hope of success, except as we realize the presence and authority of Christ. One is our master, even Christ. It is his commandment to “go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.” “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.” All our strength as ministers of the Gospel is from Christ. Paul and Apollos, Calvin and Edwards, are nothing without him. He giveth the increase. As the clouds from which the rain descends have not that rain in themselves, but derive it from the sea and various moist places of the earth, and then disperse it abroad; so all the *efficacy* of the Gospel which is preached, is derived from Jesus Christ, who is the overflowing fountain of all that is good and holy. The treasure is committed to earthen vessels that the excellence of the power may be of God.

With two remarks, I close this discourse.

And the *first* is this, that to be a minister of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, is to bear an awful and fearful responsibility. No man should take this office upon himself unless he is called of God to it. And then he should ever bear in mind that he is set to watch for souls as one that must give an account to the Judge of quick and dead in the light of eternity. Christ's ascension gift is not nuncios, popes and cardinals; nor clergymen, nor assemblies, nor vicar-generals, nor rabbis, nor Ulemans, nor reverend, nor right reverends, but *bishops or pastors* to feed the people with knowledge and understanding. Of all things clerical,

pride and pomp and hypocrisy are the most contemptible. What can be more melancholy than to see a man who is set between the living and the dead—a mouth for God—himself a poor sinful man, converted and saved by free grace, and honored with the ministry of reconciliation, so far forgetting his high calling as to compliment himself in the pulpit, and be far more anxious to show himself off, than to win souls to heaven by preaching Christ and Him crucified?

The *second remark* is, that in proportion to the divine authority attached to the living ministry of the word, is the responsibility on the part of the hearers of preachers of the Gospel, to take heed how and what they hear. As men sent of God to preach the Gospel of His grace, their authority is from heaven. In preaching Christ and Him crucified, they speak not their own words, but the words of God. If you receive their message, you shall inherit eternal life; if you reject it, you reject the offer of pardoning mercy from your eternal Judge. *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned.*

May the ever blessed Head of the Church multiply grace upon grace to you, my beloved brethren, and enable him whom you have called to be your pastor, and who is now set over you in the Lord, so to live and labor and preach from the glorious platform of the prophets and apostles, and of the noble army of martyrs, and of saints, that he may both save himself and those that hear him. May he be a burning and a shining light among you many years. May he be full of faith and of the Holy Ghost—mighty in the Scriptures—showing unto you the way of salvation; and when he stands before you at the judgment seat of Christ, may his sentence be: *Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou with this thy flock into the joy of thy Lord.*

AMEN, AND AMEN.

CREDULITY.

Infidels scoff at the *credulity* of the Christian. But let us fairly state the case, and see whether of all beings in existence the infidel is not the most weakly credulous. What is the infidel's creed? He believes, that the whole world united in a conspiracy to impose upon themselves about the era of the introduction of christianity; that they *invented* an universal persuasion of the coming of some great personage, and that by *mere accident* their conjecture was verified in the birth of Christ; that verses or poems, the productions of men who lived several hundred years before, *accidentally happened* to apply to that extraordinary person, and things the most contradictory did *accidentally* concur in him; that

he was a deceiver, and an enthusiast, and a false claimant to a divine commission, and yet, that he was, without exception, the purest and most amiable of beings ; and that he succeeded in his object without any of the means usually employed by similar characters ; for without money, without troops, without power, he convinced multitudes of his divine authority. He believes, that after Christ was openly crucified as a malefactor, twelve illiterate fishermen took up the extraordinary tale that he had risen from the dead, although these fishermen *must have known the contrary if he was a deceiver*, and without any assignable motive, in the face of danger and death, they formed the bold design of converting the whole world to a belief of this strange story ; that although aware of the calamities which they must thus occasion to mankind, and therefore men of unfeeling and cruel disposition, their writings and actions exhibit the purest morality and the most benevolent spirit ; that without education or literature they composed several works, in which the leading character or subject of their memoirs, if a fictitious personage, is unquestionably one of the most wonderful creatures of imagination that the range of literature can furnish—a character altogether unlike that of any being who ever dwelt on earth—sustained throughout with the most exact consistency, and the most minute and apparently unnecessary particularity of dates and times and places ; that they travelled over the greater part of the world, every where successful, though every where persecuted ; and that they were eventually the means of subverting the religious establishment of the most powerful nation on earth. Yes, and the infidel believes that all this was CHANCE ; these men impostors ; the whole story a fable and a forgery !! If it be so, then the case is without a parallel in history ; and the man who receives the creed of the infidel, betrays a credulity so capacious, a faculty so prodigious of overlooking difficulties, that we cannot but suspect there is something wrong in the ordinary powers of his understanding. But the case is otherwise. Infidelity is not so much a derangement of the *head* as of the *heart*. Believing as we do, that the words of Christ are words of eternal truth, we maintain that it is impossible for any man to disbelieve the Bible, who searches it with a right spirit. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."